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Patty Sands, *Editor*

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PSCnews

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PSC Announces DMS Full Text Searching Capability

The South Carolina Public Service Commission is proud to announce the addition of a much anticipated new feature to our automated docket management system DMS: Full Text Searching. This new capability enables deep-level searching of thousands of scanned documents via the Public Service Commission's DMS web site. Full Text Searching employs an interface similar to that found on Westlaw and other legal research sites, which allows for simple and complex searches. The search engine is fully optimized, returning results in under a second. Search results include a unique context display with search terms highlighted, along with a summary and download link for each document.

The Full Text Searching feature can be accessed by first locating the Commission's website at www.psc.sc.gov. Next, the user must click on "Dockets" in the upper right-hand corner of the screen to enter DMS. Then the user can access the Full Text Searching feature by clicking on "Dockets/Search", "Matters", or "Orders" on the left-hand side of the screen.

The screenshot shows the DMS Full Text Search Results page. The search term 'depreciation' is entered in the search bar. The results list shows three items, each with a summary, context (highlighted search terms), and a download link.

- Summary:** [REDACTED] before the South Carolina Public Service Commission (the "Commission") on the proposed Settlement Agreement (the Settlement Agreement) filed by the Office of Regulatory Staff (ORS) and Utilities Services of South Carolina, Inc. (Utilities Services or the Company) (together, the parties). Per ORS Per USSC Total General and Administrative Expenses-Per ORS Depreciation and Amortization.
- Context:** [REDACTED] APPROVING) SETTLEMENT) AGREEMENT AND) RATES AND CHARGES) CONTAINED THEREIN This matter is before the South Carolina Public Service Commission (the "Commission") on the proposed Settlement Agreement (the Settlement Agreement) filed by the Office of Regulatory Staff (ORS) and Utilities Services of South Carolina, Inc. (Utilities Services or the Company) (together, the parties). Per ORS Per USSC Total General and Administrative Expenses-Per ORS [D] Depreciation and Amortization...
Link: [Download \(PDF: 699k\)](#)
- Summary:**) ORDER APPROVING) NEW RATES AND) CHARGES AND) DEPRECIATION RATES I. INTRODUCTION This matter comes before the South Carolina Public Service Commission (hereinafter the "Commission") by way of the Application of [REDACTED]

Initial feedback from DMS users who have used the Full Text Search is very positive. This feature improves productivity and makes the information stored in DMS more accessible and beneficial to the public and all parties associated with proceedings before the Commission.

From the Chair...Randy Mitchell



Over the past year, South Carolina's natural gas consumers have experienced unfortunate, but unavoidable cost increases. Wholesale, natural gas prices at the wellhead (the price paid by the gas distribution companies, such as SCE&G and Piedmont) increased 100% from about \$7.00 per

dekatherm to about \$14.00 per dekatherm between the spring and fall of 2005. The wholesale cost of gas component typically makes up about 95% of a residential customer's overall natural gas bill.

These cost increases have been passed on to consumers through purchased gas adjustment (PGA) proceedings for natural gas distribution companies and fuel cost tariffs for electric utilities that use natural gas as a fuel to generate electricity. Both PGAs and fuel cost tariffs are approved by the Public Service Commission. The General Assembly and the PSC have created the PGA mechanism so that companies may recover their wholesale cost of gas more efficiently in the volatile natural gas market, and so that they can quickly adjust prices if costs go up or down. Gas prices may be adjusted monthly. Electric utilities adjust their fuel costs on an annual basis to reflect changing costs of their generation fuels and purchased power.

Unlike rate cases, PGAs and fuel cost tariffs do not involve a company's profit margins; they merely allow the company to pass on the actual cost of the natural gas which it distributes to its customers. Generally, the public does not realize that when a gas distribution company (all of the state's gas utilities are distributors of natural gas, none of them produce gas) raises its prices due to higher fuel costs, it is simply passing on its wholesale costs to the consumer. The law does not allow the utilities to make any profits from PGAs or fuel cost tariffs.

Another, sometimes overlooked, aspect of PGAs and fuel cost tariffs is that they also cause price decreases for natural gas customers and electric utilities using natural gas as a generation fuel. In fact, natural gas distribution companies have reduced gas prices four times in the first two months of 2006. While a number of factors, including increased demand from emerging

markets such as China, are likely to keep natural gas prices higher than they were a year ago, the short term spike caused by hurricanes Katrina and Wilma last fall has dropped.

I commend the regulated utilities and the Office of Regulatory Staff for promptly taking the necessary steps to transmit the savings caused by decreasing wholesale prices to South Carolina's consumers. The PSC will continue its vigilant monitoring of natural gas prices so as to ensure that any future decreases are quickly transmitted to the state's consumers.

In Brief...

*By Charlie Terreni,
Chief Clerk
and
Administrator*



*Regulations grow at the same rate as weeds.
-Norman R. Augustine*

Heeding Mr. Augustine's admonition, the Commission has drafted revised regulations for Article 8 (practice and procedure), Article 6 (telecommunications), Article 7 (water), and Article 5 (sewerage). These revisions are necessary to conform our regulations to the structural changes brought about by Act 175 of 2004, and are also meant to make practice before the Commission simpler and more transparent.

I would like to especially thank our Deputy Clerk, Jocelyn Boyd, and our Senior Counsel, David Butler, for shouldering the heavy burden of drafting and disseminating these revisions for public comment. We also had significant help from outside the agency.

Our advisory group of attorneys who practice before the Public Service Commission were very helpful in revising the regulations. The Public Service Commission circulated draft revisions of the regulations and invited comment from the public. We convened meetings in which members of the advisory group participated in open discussions of the proposed regulatory changes providing detailed and helpful comments. The result of such collaboration is a set of regulations that can serve the needs of the public and industry alike.

New Faces at the Public Service Commission

Randall Dong, Staff Counsel



Randall Dong comes to the Public Service Commission from private practice in the Columbia area. He is excited about the opportunity to work at the PSC. Randall brings along with him his expertise in the

legal arena of consumer protection law. In addition, Randall has working knowledge of employment and labor law, and immigration and nationality law.

Randall grew up in Jackson, Mississippi, as the oldest of three children. Both of his parents are pharmacists, but Randall chose a different career. He attended Mississippi State University where he majored in political science and received his law degree from the University of Virginia Law School.

Residing near the USC campus, Randall and his wife, Tracy Skipper, are in close proximity to Tracy's office where she is a publications editor for the University 101 program at USC. Additionally, the Dongs take advantage of the many cultural events offered by the University of South Carolina and other Columbia fine arts organizations. They practice their faith at St. Joseph's Catholic Church.

Randall says that Columbia feels like home as he has been here thirteen years. For rest and relaxation, Randall enjoys reading, especially novels written by Southern authors. He stays abreast of current events and politics as well. Randall is an avid sports fan, and he follows all the teams of his alma mater, Mississippi State, as well as the Atlanta Braves and the New Orleans Saints.

Currently, the Dong household consists of Randall and his wife Tracy, but things will soon change with the anticipated April birth of their first child, a son. Randall is looking forward to sharing his love of reading with his son, teaching him about sports, and learning to change diapers.

Patty Sands, Administrative Coordinator

The newest member of the Public Service Commission staff is Patty Sands. Patty was recently hired as an administrative coordinator to assist the chief clerk and deputy clerk with information technology needs and solutions. Prior to coming to the PSC, she was with the University of South Carolina's College of Arts and Sciences.

Patty has an industrial engineering degree from Auburn University and was employed with Carolina Eastman Company prior to starting her family. After the birth of her first child, a daughter, she left the workforce to raise her family. During the ensuing years, she became a home educator as well, and her oldest child will graduate high school this spring as a homeschool student.

In addition to her daughter, Patty has two active teenage sons. They are involved in sports in the high school and recreation league programs. Having grown up with four brothers, Patty is a sports enthusiast and tries to attend all her sons' matches and games.

Patty and her children are active members of St.



Peter's Catholic Church where she is a Eucharistic Minister and her daughter is a lector. In her free time, Patty enjoys swimming, walking the dog, and playing tennis, the latter of which she hopes to do more of this year. As previously mentioned, Patty gets excited about sports and really enjoys college football. But one of her favorite things to do is spend time with her three children whether at home, on vacation, or just going out to eat, because she knows how fast those childhood years pass.

She is looking forward to utilizing her systems analyst skills within the PSC and has enjoyed meeting all the friendly people of the agency.

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